

# Dual Diagnosis Recovery Network; Untangling the Web of Disorders



**L**ife isn't perfect. Though, we usually try to find some sort of middle ground and eek out an existence we can be happy with. Most of us work hard to gain our little pieces of "paradise." Then, when we least expect or want them, problems arise. It could be a flat tire, having to pay for braces or the death of a loved one. However, we can, usually, wade through these occurrences and continue on with our lives.

For others, however, it isn't always this simple.

Imagine being 18 years old. A high school senior with the whole world before you. Now imagine you just happen to be suffering from one illness, such as depression. On top of that, you suffer from another illness, such as alcoholism. Life's little problems aren't so little any more, and hopes and dreams are purely fictional. What are your options now?

Dual Diagnosis (DD) is the term applied to people who have a combination of mental illness (such as depression) and chemical dependency. An estimated 10 million Americans suffer from this disorder.

For people living with these conditions, there is hope. Founded in 1995, a program called the "Dual Diagnosis

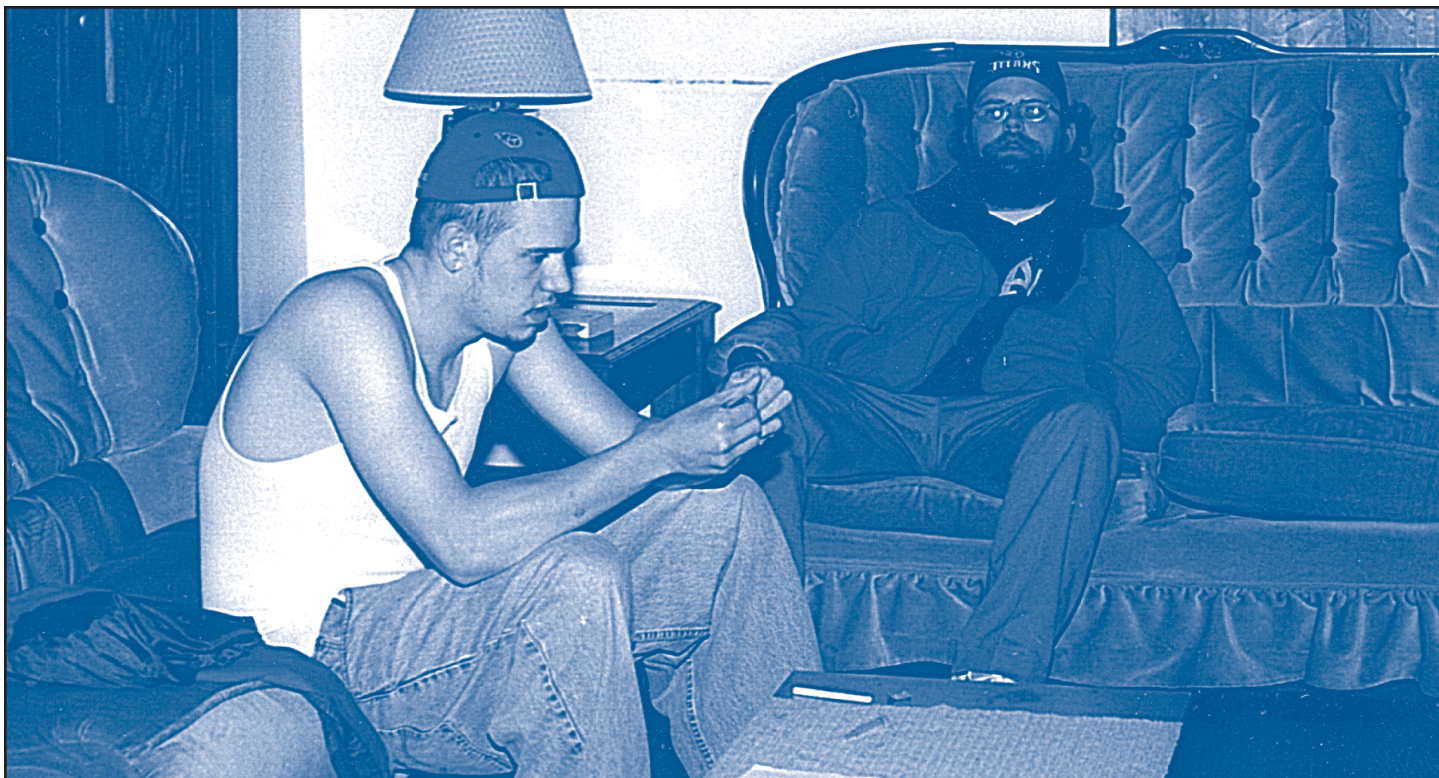
Recovery Network" (DDRN) began out of a desire to provide an answer for the many failures to heal the dually diagnosed. Its goal: "To promote the recovery of all persons who are affected by the dual disorders of mental illness and chemical dependency."

Tim Hamilton, community resource director for the Dual Diagnosis Recovery Network, said that through training, education, advocacy and self-help, professionals, consumers and family members can understand the problems being faced and work toward a better tomorrow.

"The public needs to be informed," Hamilton said. "If you make people aware of the joined problems and how to start treating them, the challenges that surround these people and their families will decrease considerably."

Since its inception, DDRN has provided inservice training programs, workshops and conferences throughout the region, state and nation. The latest research and services that the agency has compiled is passed on to the interested attendees. These education and training programs are the building blocks of their ongoing education process. A process that can change people's lives.





Tackling tough problems, the DDRN has set up a series of halfway homes and therapeutic community houses where individuals can seek help in overcoming their various mental and physical crises.

“There are perception barriers concerning dual diagnosis,” Hamilton said. “This is something that is rarely talked about. It’s a topic that is rarely published and even more rarely discussed in assistance based programs.”

Hamilton said the perception barriers that surround dual disorders are:

- No information
- Wrong information
- Limited information
- Identifying mental illness and identifying chemical dependency without identifying them together as a dual disorder

“The former Surgeon General of the United States, for example, had initiated landmark public education to address suicide prevention, mental health and healthcare,” Hamilton said. “Although he did discuss both mental health and chemical dependency, he didn’t discuss them specifically relating to dual disorders.”

The DDRN, a program of Foundations, is jointly funded in part by the Department of Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities and the Department of Health’s Bureau of Alcohol and Drug Abuse Services. Foundations provides a full continuum of services for people who are affected by dual disorders.

“We help them look at the opportunities that are gained by undergoing treatment,” Hamilton said.

Treatment may encompass one of many options including medication, a change in living arrangements or diet and psychiatric help. In dual recovery, both illnesses have to be treated together.

“Foundations provides day and evening outpatient services, counseling and, if need be, referrals for hospitalized care,” Hamilton said.

**“In dual recovery,  
we need to treat both  
illnesses together.”**

**—Tim Hamilton  
Community Resource Director,  
Dual Diagnosis Recovery  
Network**

While the workshops can be vital tools, everyday needs and challenges have to be met and overcome. To do this, DDRN offers assistance to develop self-help support groups, such as Dual Recovery Anonymous (DRA), at the community level. These groups are available to individuals affected by dual disorders. Currently, there is a need to develop self-help groups for families.

Even though treatment is centered on the individual, others can be affected by the disorder. Families, friends and co-workers all interact with those in need. Guilt, anger, fear, shame and hopelessness can bring about stress or health problems in those closely associated to the dually diagnosed sufferers.

“We have to strengthen the families,” Hamilton said. “They’re around the individuals and have to know how to help and help themselves. Families are at serious risk.”





To aid in this process, Foundations has initiated the “Strengthening Families Program.” It offers an opportunity for families affected with a dual diagnosis problem a chance to make it through the difficult times. Children are at an extremely high risk and early prevention is critical. The goal is to reduce the substance abuse risk status that they face. Participants learn communication, decision-making and what dual diagnosis actually is. Parenting training is also available in 14-week and 6-week training groups.

The DDRN is currently undertaking a grassroots campaign throughout Tennessee. The campaign’s goal is to inform communities and form coalitions dedicated to fighting dual diagnosis.

“A statewide task force including a broad cross section of mental health and chemical dependency groups, service providers, advocacy groups, policy makers, families, friends and consumers has been formed to look at the seriousness of dual diagnosis. Funded by Foundations, the task force plans to establish dialogue that will recognize the combined problems of mental health and chemical dependency and the need to treat both problems together. “We’re all on the same page but, we



Left: It is up to each individual to want to be helped. Staying with the program can be the most trying time in their lives. Here, a participant goes to a house meeting.

Top: Supervision and counseling are included in the arrangements. Group sessions help deal with circumstances ranging from the weekly menu to handling situations between participants.

need a bigger page,” Hamilton said. “Together we can look for the answers.”

Currently, the DDRN and Foundations have established several other services to help consumers cope with the dual disorders.

A “Dual Diagnosed Enhanced Therapeutic Community” (DDETC) is designed to house individuals from an average of six weeks to three months. Round-the-clock staff supervision by resident counselors help untangle the web of problems suffered by the dually diagnosed.

The “Dual Diagnosis Enhanced Halfway House” (DDEHH) is available for those soon to be re-integrated into society. As opposed to the 24-hour staffing plan in the intensive program, clinical staff members are available eight hours per day. Twenty-four-hour crisis call availability is open to attendees.

The final phase of the Foundations’ continuum is the “Dual Diagnosis Enhanced Independent Living” (DDEIL). Therapy sessions are reduced to monthly or bimonthly contacts. Consumers are responsible for coordinating community services, psychiatric visits, medications and financial goals/agreements. The length of stay in DDEIL ranges from two to four months.

With the help of individuals, statewide, answers and better understanding towards treatment in dual diagnosis cases can be realized.

“We’re at the very groundbreaking stage of it all,” Hamilton said. “I’m eager to see what’s next.”

*For further information on the Dual Diagnosis Recovery Network call toll free (888) 869-9230 Ext. 208.*

# Strengthening Families

## A Program for **FAMILIES** Affected by **DUAL DISORDERS**

To obtain information about the "Strengthening Families" Project, you can reach us at:

**FOUNDATIONS ASSOCIATES**  
**Vickie Harden, Program Director**  
*"Strengthening Families" Project*

220 Venture Circle  
Nashville, TN 37228

Phone: (615) 742-1000  
Fax: (615) 742-1009

"Equipping families with the tools  
they need to succeed"

## What Is the Strengthening Families Project?

Foundations Associates is offering an opportunity for families affected with a dual diagnosis of chemical dependency and mental illness to "Strengthen the Family" through a research grant from the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (CSAP) with the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and the Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities.

## Who is eligible to attend?

Families where one of the primary caregivers has been diagnosed with a dual diagnosis of chemical dependency and

mental illness with at least one child who is elementary school aged. All adults who provide care to that child are encouraged to attend (significant others, grandparents, other caregivers).

## How is the group structured?

The groups are designed to be helpful to families, so there will be a variety of experiences and discussions about the topics that affect families the most. Participants will learn about communication, decision-making, handling difficult situations and dual diagnosis. They then will be given the opportunity to put these skills into practice. The groups are meant to be fun as new skills are learned.

## What is meant by research?

Foundations Associates has a unique opportunity to learn more about the needs of parents and children that are affected by substance abuse and emotional problems by providing skills and insights about them and their families.

Some of the families will be attending a 14-week parent and child group, while others will attend a 6-week parent group. All those who are enrolled will receive parenting training.

By participating in this research design, Foundations Associates will learn more about what is most helpful to families and will be able to share this information with others. All identifying information will be kept strictly confidential and only the results will be shared. No one, other than the staff, will have knowledge of the families participation.

## How do I enroll in the group?

In order to be assessed for this program, simply call (615) 256-9002 and an assessment counselor will set up a time to meet with you and your family. Each assessment will last about two hours. Following completion of the interview, the assessment counselor will talk with you about your involvement with the project.





# A.I.M.

## The Rebuilding of a Life

**I**ncreasing numbers of individuals with mental illness “self medicate” with drugs or alcohol to “feel better.”

Nationally, it is estimated that between 50 to 80 percent of individuals with mental illness have dual disorders of substance abuse. Last year, Tennessee reported over 50 percent of the admissions at the state’s five mental health institutes were individuals diagnosed with co-occurring disorders of mental illness and substance abuse.

Chattanooga’s A.I.M. Center (Achievement, Independence, Motivation) is addressing this local need by

creating individualized service plans. These provide educational and support group sessions and coordinate services with clinical treatment providers.

For one consumer, James, this approach works.

“A.I.M. allowed me to take the gradual steps that are necessary in achieving self-sufficiency,” James said.

James attributes his manic depression at one point in his life for making him prosperous.

“I worked hard to keep up with the mania,” James said. “Then, chemical dependency came into play.”

He found himself homeless. For six years he slept on wooden pallets covered by a cardboard box. Plastic sheeting made up his roof.

James has been at A.I.M. for over a year. He is employed as the consumer resident manager at the center’s 28-unit apartment complex. He now provides support to the disabled tenants who are learning to cope with community integration.

He’s not certain how he ended up in the hospital after a suicide attempt. But, he is grateful for the attending physicians who stabilized him on medication for his mental illness. When





Left: Chattanooga's A.I.M. Center (Achievement, Independence, Motivation) addresses a local need by creating individualized service plans. These plans will provide educational and support group sessions and coordinate services with clinical treatment providers.

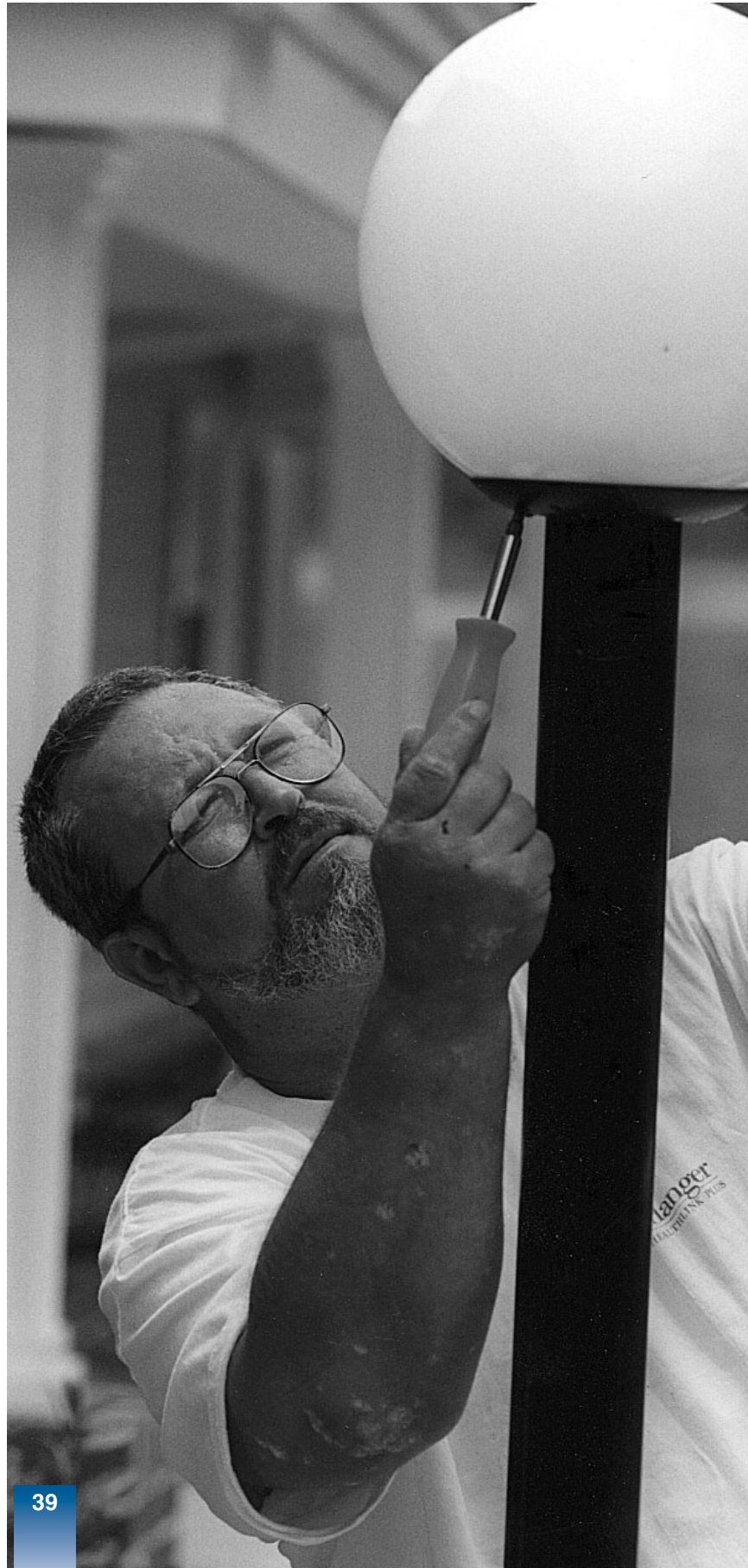
Below: Since coming to the A.I.M. Center, James has seen a dramatic turn-around in his life.

he was discharged, he was referred to the A.I.M. Center.

Last Thanksgiving, he was reunited with his 18-year-old son and 10-year-old-daughter. It was their first meeting in seven years.

Since being founded in 1989, the A.I.M. Center has helped over 1,000 individuals. The center provides a "clubhouse" environment where members work together with staff to build self-esteem, self-efficiency and skills for community integration.

*For further information on the A.I.M. Center, call (423) 624-4800.*





# Jobs Provide Key to Independence

Park Center Assists Persons with Mental Illness Prepare for the Work World



Above and right: Allen Beech feverishly buses tables and performs general clean-up duties at Dan's Cafe in Nashville.

Left: The Park Center, located at 801 12th Avenue South provides individuals with valuable job skills and work within three different systems.



**W**hile most people gripe and moan about going to work, Allen Beech is just the opposite.

Beech has found a way to re-enter his community with work skills and a positive attitude for the future.

Beech, who suffered with the dual diagnosis of bipolar disorder and substance abuse, came to Nashville's Park Center seeking to overcome his problems.

Park Center is a non-profit psychosocial rehabilitation center that has been serving the Nashville community since 1984.

Its goal is to assist members prepare for the work world and help in finding affordable housing. Members can receive training in interviewing skills, resume preparation, appropriate dress and specific job skills.

Another goal is to help each person with mental illness become independent. During 2000-2001, the center placed 102 members into employment in the community.

It is because of Nashville's Park Center that Beech was able to secure employment within the community.

Consumers, like Beech, come to the center every day to learn valuable job skills and work in one of three different units: clerical, food service and environmental.

In the clerical unit, members learn computer and general office skills. The food service unit prepares and serves lunch each day. Overall maintenance and cleanliness of the building is the responsibility of the environmental unit.

In any unit, members learn job skills so they can achieve their goal of finding employment.





Above: Amy Shurden, a Park Center staff member, shows Beech how to work a typing program. Park Center maintains resources to train its consumers for the work world.

Below: Various groups in and around Nashville bring consumers to use Park Center's services.

Beech has relapsed a few times over the years. But, he says the staff and members at Park Center have always been there to provide encouragement and support.

His most recent success was getting a job at Dan's cafe, a local restaurant. Five days a week he can be found cleaning windows, sweeping, mopping and busing tables.

What may seem like a simple job to others is actually a step towards independence for individuals with mental illnesses.

From time to time, he goes back to Park Center to use its various job-finding services.

In his spare time, Beech enjoys sketching, playing the guitar and keeping a journal. In the journal, Beech lists tasks that he has completed and his goals and accomplishments. He said

that the journal helps keep him focused on the positive things in his life.

"I enjoy doing something constructive," Beech said. "A job gives me responsibilities and with that, a whole new world."

His is just one of many stories of individuals, at Park Center, with mental illness working toward independence.

Recently, Park Center received a one-year accreditation for its Psychosocial Rehabilitation Program and also, its Employment Program from CARE, the Rehabilitation Accreditation Commission.

"Park Center is to be commended in its quest for quality programs and services," said Donald F. Galvin, Ph.D. and CEO of CARE.

*For more information on Park Center, call (615) 242-3576.*